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Petra,

A PRIZE POEM,

RECITED IN THE THEATRE, OXFORD,

JUNE IV, MDCCCXLV.

BY

JOHN WILLIAM BURGON,

WORCESTER COLLEGE



OXFORD,

PRINTED BY W. BAXTER.

FRANCIS MACPHERSON, HIGH STREET.

MDCCCXLV.



L L L
with the kind love of his father,
Petra, *& most affect. Friend*
the writer.

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PETRA,

THE capital of that portion of Arabia which is thence called Petråa, occupies a mountain-hollow in the rocky region known as the Land of Seir; extending from the north-eastern extremity of the Arabian gulph to the south of the Dead Sea;—a territory which the Almighty assigned to the Edomites, or descendants of Esau. It is twice mentioned in Scripture by the equivalent Hebrew name SELAH, or *the Rock*: and thenceforward, (namely, from the seventh or eighth century before our æra,) it obtains no further notice for four hundred years. During this interval the Nabathæans, or descendants of Nebaioth, the eldest son of Ishmael, had expelled the Edomites from their ancient stronghold, and driven them northward, where their territory was recognised for a few centuries under the Hellenized name of Idumæa. Then it was that one portion of the prophecy concerning the descendants of Esau obtained its fulfilment: they faded from the world's eye, and ceased to be a nation.

Petråa, henceforth part of the Nabathæan territory, became a Roman province; and PETRA, as some ancient historians relate, and as its astonishing ruins abundantly testify, continued to be its wealthy and flourishing capital.

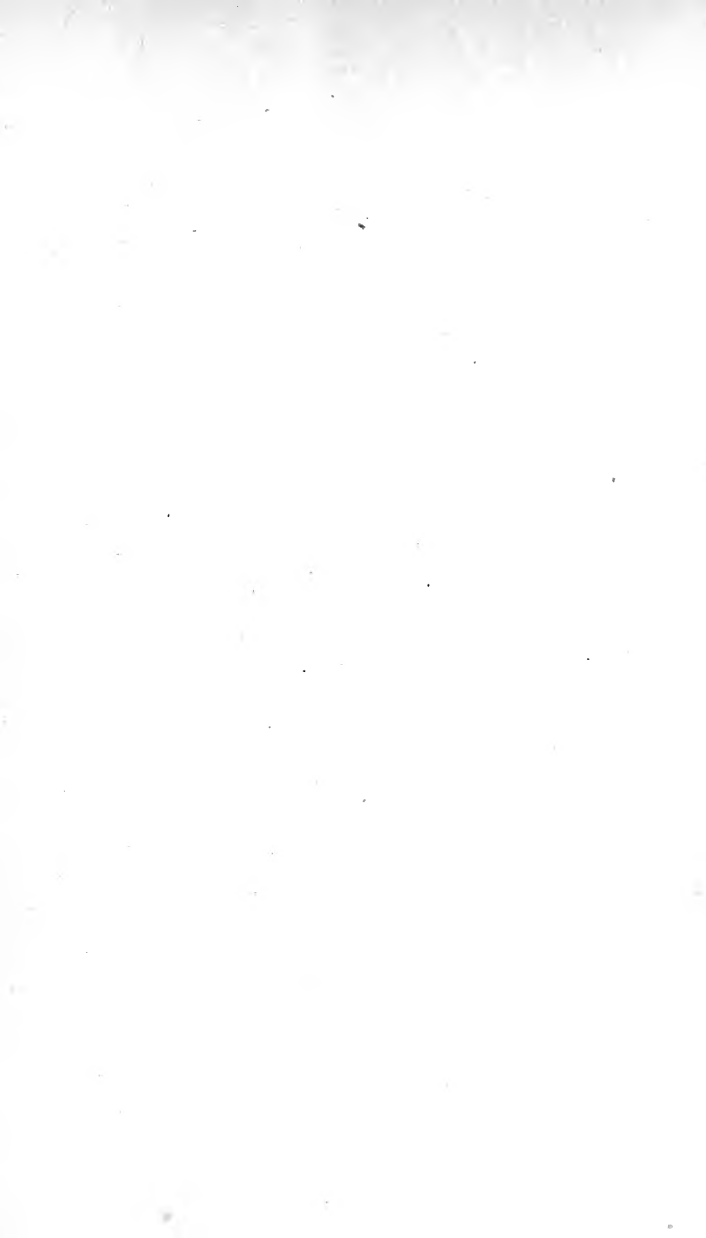
It obtains some slight ecclesiastical notice so late as the sixth century: but from that time it suddenly disappears from the page of history; and the doom pronounced on the land of the Edomites was entirely accomplished. PETRA had continued wholly unknown for twelve hundred years, when the adventurous Burckhardt discovered its ruins in 1812.

Some valuable and interesting notices of this wonderful city, and the surrounding region, are found in the second volume of Dr. Robinson's Biblical Researches; and the external features of the place are delineated in Laborde's folio work on Petra; but Roberts's Sketches are by far the most eloquent commentary that has yet appeared on the subject.

ARGUMENT.

SACRED associations allow us to regard the land of Edom almost as the birth-place of song.—In the desolation with which it has been visited, Petra has shared largely.—Enviably feelings of the Traveller who discovered its forgotten site.—The magnificent scenery around Petra,—recalling the miracle of the Exode.—Wonderful approach to the city.—Meditation on its beautiful ruins.—The grandeur—gaiety (suggested by the remains of a theatre)—and flourishing condition of Petra in the time of the Romans,—from which, in common with the rest of the cities of Edom, it fell by some awful but unrecorded visitation.—The early and later state of the surrounding country contrasted.—Its present barrenness exhibits the fulfilment of the prophecies concerning it; denounced chiefly in consequence of the hostility of the Edomites against the children of Israel.

The Poem concludes by contrasting the hopeless desolation of Edom and the extinction of Esau's descendants, with the prospects of the Holy Land and the glorious promises in store for the posterity of Jacob.



Petra.

“ The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high ; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground ?

“ Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the LORD.”

SPIRIT of Song ! that oft at dewy eve,
When Elfin sprites their frolic dances weave,
Meetest the poet as he walks unseen
The twilight valley, or the dusky green ;—
Or by some mountain lake's romantic brim
Wakest the drowsy echoes, all for him ;—
And many a time art well content to stray
Where garden-alleys quench the blaze of day,
And small birds sing, and babbling fountains play :
Know'st thou the land—a land of giant mould—
By Heav'n assign'd to Edom's race of old^a ?

^a “ I have given Mount Seir unto Esau for a possession.”
Deut. ii. 5.

Where rocks on rocks—on mountains mountains pil'd—
 Have form'd a scene so wondrous and so wild,
 That gazing there man seems to gaze upon
 The rough rude ocean frozen into stone?
 Full well thou know'st! 'for sure, when Israel wound
 His homeward journey o'er that hallow'd ground,—
 Forc'd in the depths of those wild hills to wait
 And kneel, a suppliant, at his brother's gate,—
 While burning anthems rose from many a tongue,
 Not coldly mute the harp of Judah hung!
 And did not one, in yet remoter time,
 Wake there the 'birth-notes of the holy chime?'
 Doth not to Edom's rugged land belong
 The man of Uz—the Morning-star of song^b!
 Yea, and to Fancy's ear, o'er rock and hill
 More solemn harpings there are floating still.
 Harps that long since have been attun'd above
 To hymns of joy, and seraph-lays of love,
 In awful strains from many a trembling wire
 Have pour'd o'er Edom words of deepest ire!

^b Job i. 1. The date commonly assigned to this Book, the most ancient in the world, is B. C. 1520.—The land where Job dwelt (which seems to have derived its name from Uz, the grandson of Shem, Gen. x. 23.) is identified with Edom by the prophet Jeremiah, Lament. iv. 21.

Words that yet live and burn—in whose keen ray
 The life and light of Edom ebb'd away:
 Still fading, star-like, from the blaze of day^c! }

And thou too, Petra, tho' the Roman came
 And fann'd thy dying glories into flame;
 Carv'd the tall column—rear'd the stately dome—
 And seem'd the founder of a second Rome,—
 How brief the pageant^d! On thy dying brow
 Men laid a crown—but who shall crown thee now?
 A thousand summers o'er thy ruins crept:
 A thousand winters o'er thy ruins wept:
 A thousand years—and still the very spot
 Where once thou wert so glorious, was forgot!

What joy was his—the wandering man, who first
 Dissolv'd the spell;—on whom the Vision burst
 Of that enchanted City, as it lay
 Bath'd in the splendours of a Syrian day.
 O Fancy, thou that must so oft have shed
 Dreams of its beauty round his sleeping head;
 Woke in his heart the wild-bird's wish to roam,
 And told of marvels in that mountain-home;

^c The prophecies concerning Edom, in fulness and minuteness, are second only to those concerning the chosen people of God.

^d “Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the LORD of hosts, *They shall build, but I will throw down.*” Malachi i. 4.

Still be it thine with angel-hand to guide
 These longing footsteps by that trav'ller's side!
 Waft o'er mine ear one echo of the strain
 Which dark-eyed Kedar pours along the plain;
 Or let one gaze, how brief soe'er, inspire
 These falt'ring lips to glow with Eastern fire!

Sudden, around me rocks and cliffs arise;
 The earth their footstool, and their crown the skies:
 Some soaring steep, as if to curtain round
 From mortal gaze each nook of holy ground:
 Some prostrate hurl'd, as if by that fierce storm
 Which rent the mountains, when th' Almighty form
 'Rose up from Seir;' and trembling Sinai saw
 His thousand Saints dispense His fiery law^e!
 And one there is which, beetling o'er the rest,
 Pillows a Saint upon its rocky crest^f:

^e The scene of terrific splendour which attended the delivery of the Law, so dimly hinted at in the Book of Exodus, is partly disclosed to us in later portions of the Bible. Thus in Deuteronomy; "The LORD came from Sinai and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from Mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them." Deut. xxxiii. 2. Compare Ps. lxxviii. 17. and the references to the New Testament in the margin. See also the seventh and eighth verses of the same Psalm; which seem a quotation from the Song of Deborah and Barak.

^f "And Moses did as the LORD commanded: and they went

Uplifted high—where none but stars can keep
 Their bright-eyed vigils round his lonely sleep.
 Fit scene for marvels ! In such land should none
 But giants move, and giant deeds be done.
 O'er such huge hills might fitly seem to stray
 A ransom'd people on their homeward way.
 In such wild valleys, round their Ark rever'd,
 At set of sun their myriad tents be rear'd.
 Myriads ! and yet, above them and around,
 Such giant features of the landscape frown'd,
 They seem'd no more—that people and their guide—
 Than Jethro's flock on Horeb's hallow'd side !

Ah say, ere gather'd in their destin'd fold,
 While Israel wander'd o'er this waste of old ;
 As, eve by eve, upon these mountains brown,
 Silent as snow the heav'nly bread came down ;—
 From the cleft rock as gush'd the sparkling wave
 To cheer their sinking spirits, and to save ;—
 And the bright pillar, through the livelong night,
 Shed o'er their tents its soft celestial light ;—

up into Mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation. And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son ; *and Aaron died there in the top of the Mount.*" Numb. xx. 27, 28.

Did none perchance of Judah's faithful line
 Read the high teaching of each heav'n-sent sign ^g ?
 Say—while around him others pin'd forlorn
 For Canaan's valleys "standing thick with corn"—
 Did no fond heart, with nobler instinct fraught,
 Sigh for the substance which those shadows taught ?
 On trembling pinions seek to soar above,
 Refin'd by sorrow, and sublim'd by love,—
 Till Faith discern'd what Reason dimly scann'd,
 And Hope gave promise of the better land ?

Still on for Petra,—till the desert wide
 Shrinks to a valley; and on either side
 The rude rock springeth, and a long array
 Of tombs, forgotten, sadden all the way ^h.
 Then the earth yawns, terrific : and a path,
 By Nature fram'd in waywardness or wrath,
 Winds where two rocks precipitously frown,—
 The giant warders of that wondrous town ⁱ !

^g The spiritual nature of both Sacraments was clearly set forth by Moses in the wilderness. Deut. viii. 3. and x. 16.

^h "The valley contracts more and more, and the cliffs become higher, presenting on each side, a street of tombs..... Here is the opening of the terrific chasm, which anciently formed the only avenue to the city on this side." Robinson, ii. p. 515, 516.

ⁱ "The rocks are all of reddish sand stone, perpendicular on

Day comes not here,—or in such spectral guise,
She seems an outcast from yon happy skies.

In silent awe the Arab steals along,
Nor cheers his camels with their wonted song.

Well may the spirit, left alone to brood
On the dim shapes which haunt that solitude,
O'erflow with joy—that dreary pathway past—
When Petra bursts upon the gaze at last.

O passing beautiful—in this wild spot
Temples, and tombs, and dwellings,—all forgot!
One sea of sunlight far around them spread,
And skies of sapphire mantling overhead.
They seem no work of man's creative hand,
Where Labour wrought as wayward Fancy plann'd;
But from the rock as if by magic grown,
Eternal—silent—beautiful—alone!
Not virgin white—like that old Doric shrine^k
Where once Athena held her rites divine:

both sides; and in some places they overhang the passage, so as almost to shut out the light of the sky....Indeed the whole vast mass of rock seems as if originally rent asunder by some great convulsion of nature, leaving behind this long, narrow, winding, magnificent chasm." Ibid. p. 516.

^k The Parthenon was constructed of the marble from Mount Pentelicum,—“admitting as fine a surface, and presenting as beautiful a colour, as ivory.” Leake's Athens, i. p. 334.

Not saintly grey—like many a minster fane
 That crowns the hill or sanctifies the plain :
 But rosy-red¹,—as if the blush of dawn
 Which first beheld them were not yet withdrawn :
 The hues of youth upon a brow of woe,
 Which men called old two thousand years ago !
 Match me such marvel, save in Eastern clime,—
 A rose-red city—half as old as Time !

And this is Petra—this the lofty boast
 Of Edom's once unconquerable coast !
 These the gay halls thro' which, in days of old,
 The tide of life so rapturously roll'd !
 These the proud streets where Wealth, with lavish hand,
 Pour'd the rich spoils of ev'ry Orient land ;
 All that the seaman's timid barque beguiles,
 To Cush and Ophir, ' Tarshish and the Isles :'
 Afric's red gold,—Arabia's spicy store,—
 And pearl and plume from India's furthest shore^m !

¹ “ Not the least remarkable circumstance in the peculiarities of this singular spot, is the colour of the rocks. They present not a dead mass of dull monotonous red ; but an endless variety of bright and living hues, from the deepest crimson to the softest pink.” Robinson, ii. 531. Irby and Mangles, and Laborde, repeatedly notice the singular effect of the “ rose-coloured granite” of Petra.

^m “ The inhabitants of this region had early become extremely engaged in commerce, as the carriers of the rich products

How chang'd—how fallen ! All her glory fled,
 The widow'd city ⁿ mourns her many dead.
 Like some fond heart which gaunt Disease hath left
 Of all it liv'd for—all it lov'd, bereft ;
 Mute in its anguish ! struck with pangs too deep
 For words to utter, or for tears to weep.

Yet hearts and eyes there be, well skill'd to trace
 The living features in the lifeless face,
 For whom that silent desert air seems rife
 With tuneful voices and the pulse of life.
 For them sweeps by in glitt'ring pomp again
 The warlike pageant and the peaceful train :
 For them bright shadows fill these vacant halls,
 And Beauty wakes where'er their footstep falls.
 " Heard ye it not ?"—the bright-eyed dreamer cries,—
 " Heard ye no shout from yonder seats arise ?"

of the East between the Red Sea and the ports of the Phenicians. In the first expedition sent by Antigonos, the men of Petra were absent at a mart, and Athenæus found in Petra a large quantity of frankincense and myrrh, and five hundred talents of silver. Strabo relates that the merchandize of India and Arabia was transported on camels from Leuce Kome to Petra, and thence to Rhinocolura, and other places. Under the Romans this trade appears to have become still more prosperous," &c. Robinson, ii. 561, 562.

ⁿ On the coins of Petra, the city is represented as a veiled and turreted female sitting on a rock.

• One of the first objects which arrests the eye of the

(And his rapt gaze in ecstasy is bent
 On what seems Pleasure's mournful monument.)
 " Ye deem the actor and his mimic rage
 Pass'd like a shadow from you ruin'd stage ;
 But to mine eye he lives and moves :—'tis *we*
 Are shadows here—the substance only he !
 Or do I dream ?—they come and fade so fast—
 Now here, now there—now present, and now past.
 But now, a stern old king^p,—whom anguish strong
 Had goaded into madness—stalk'd along,
 Sightless and crownless : . . . now, a maiden^q stands
 Ev'n where he stood ; and in her lily hands
 Enfolds an urn : ineffable the grace—
 The marble sorrow of that classic face !
 It fades—'tis fled ! . . . and on a lofty car
 There sits another^r :—like some baleful star

traveller on emerging from the terrific defile which forms the approach to Petra, is a " theatre, wholly hewn out of the live rock. . . . The cliffs on each side are full of tombs ; while in front, along the face of the eastern cliffs, the eye of the spectator rests on a multitude of the largest and most splendid sepulchres. Strange contrast ! where a taste for the frivolities of the day, was at the same time gratified by the magnificence of tombs ; amusement in a cemetery ; a theatre in the midst of sepulchres." Robinson, ii. p. 521, 522.

^p Oedipus. See the Oed. Tyr. v. 1307, and following verses.

^q Electra. See the passage beginning ὦ φιλέτατον μνημῖον ἀνθρώπων ἑμοῖ. Soph. El. 1126.

^r Cassandra. Æsch. Ag. 1039. 1054.

Glares her wild eye^a—and from her lips of ire
 Streams a full torrent of prophetic fire^c.
 She raves—she rises—and with frenzied hand
 Dashes to earth her garland and her wand^u
 Sublimely beautiful ! when this is o'er
 Let nothing follow.—I will gaze no more !”

And did ye thus, ye men of Petra—say,
 Thus did ye while the listless hours away ?
 Tho’ ev’ry cliff, tho’ ev’ry crag around,
 With graves on graves innumerable frown’d—
 Thus could ye sit, contented with a toy,
 And lapt in dreams of unsubstantial joy ?
 Light-hearted race ! o’er them it flung no gloom
 That Echo answer’d from a kinsman’s tomb.
 Bred in these mountain valleys, those dark eyes,
 Fierce as their summer—cloudless as their skies—
 Belov’d and loving—blest and blessing—here
 Made friends with Death throughout the livelong year^v :

^a Ibid. 1063. *τρόπος δὲ θηρὸς ὡς ναιεῖται.*

^c Ibid. 1215. *ὑπ’ αὐτῷ με δεινὸς ὀρθομαντείας πόνος | στρεβοῖ,*
ταράσσειν φροῖμοις ἱφημίοις, κ. τ. λ.

^u *ἴτ’ ἐς φλόρον πιδόντ’.* See *ibid.* 1264—1270.

^v “ In looking at the wonders of this ancient city, one is at a loss, whether most to admire the wildness of the position and natural scenery, or the taste and skill with which it was fashioned into a secure retreat, and adorned with splendid

And hop'd, perchance, when Life's gay round was o'er,
 And joy and sorrow sway'd their hearts no more,
 Their faithful souls, unfetter'd, yet might dwell
 Amid the haunts they lov'd in life so well !

And Petra thus had rear'd another race
 In turn to revel in her pride of place :
 Thus the old eagles of imperial Rome
 Seem'd on her hills to find a second home :
 And Roman arts with Roman arms arose,
 To blot the mem'ry of her former foes.
 Tho' Edom's line, by Ishmael's^{*} sword oppress'd,
 Had long been exil'd from their rock-built nest,
 On Edom's rugged hills, as loath to set,
 The sun of bygone summers linger'd yet :

structures,—chiefly for the dead. The most striking feature of the place consists, not in the fact that there are occasional excavations and sculptures like those above described ; but in the innumerable multitude of such excavations, along the whole extent of perpendicular rocks adjacent to the main area, and in all the lateral valleys and chasms ; the entrances of very many of which are variously, richly, and often fantastically decorated, with every imaginable order and style of architecture." Robinson, ii. 529, 530. " Indeed throughout almost every quarter of this metropolis, the depositories of the dead must have presented themselves constantly to the eyes of the inhabitants, and have almost outnumbered the habitations of the living." Irby and Mangles (quoted by Laborde.)

* See the Advertisement prefixed to the Poem.

And men forgot—or deem'd an idle tale—
 The words of doom that hung o'er Petra's vale.
 It could not be—that old portentous chime
 So long had slumber'd by the shores of Time,
 Why heed it now? why talk of gloom to-day,
 When Heav'n is blue, and Earth so green and gay?

So spake the men of old—and ev'ry heart
 To festive revel, or to crowded mart,
 Flew for its joy,—not oft'ner sought than found,—
 So gaily there the circling hours went round!
 And nurs'd were they in Luxury—and knew
 The spot of earth where ev'ry pleasure grew.
 Their fountains flung their waters to the skies:
 Their groves lay steep'd in hues of Paradise^y:
 Here rose the gorgeous sepulchre, and there
 Some fairy palace hung its roof in air:
 While climes remote each costly gift supplied,
 (For ships of Petra sail'd on ev'ry tide;)
 And all the East, in conscious splendour, roll'd
 At Petra's feet her jewels and her gold.

O that her rocks had language! and might tell
 In what wild shape the storm of vengeance fell^z.

^y Τὰ μὲν ἐκτὸς (says Strabo, speaking of Petra) κρημενῶν ἀποτόμου, τὰ δ' ἐντὸς πηγὰς ἀφθόνους ἔχοντος εἴς τε ὑδρεῖαν καὶ κηπίαν. xvi. 4. 21. (quoted by Robinson.)

^z See Robinson, ii. 575, 576.

Swift—sweeping—sudden—whensoever it came ;
 Blighting and blasting,—like the breath of flame.
 One piercing cry—one agonizing wail—
 One voice from Edom's cities told the tale:
 One cry of bitterness—and all was o'er ;
 But the far echo smote the Red-Sea shore^a ;
 And peal'd along its waters—till the waves
 Made hollow answer from their coral caves^b !

How chang'd, O Edom, since that hour, the scene
 From what the morning of thy days had been !
 When many a valley rich with corn and wine,
 When streams of earth, and dews of Heav'n were thine ;
 And flocks and herds—a patriarch's ample store—
 Till all thy cup with plenteousness ran o'er^c.

^a “ Hear the counsel of the LORD that He hath taken against Edom....The earth is moved at the noise of their fall, at the cry, *the noise thereof was heard in the Red Sea.*” Jerem. xlix. 20, 21.

^b An Italian traveller relates of his voyage on the Red Sea, “ that the weather was so calm, and the water so transparent, that he amused himself by observing the peculiarity of the depths beneath him, where weeds and corals grow to such a size, and so disposed, as almost to have the appearance of groves and gardens.”

^c The terms of Esau's blessing (Gen. xxvii. 39.) well agree with what we read of the pastoral wealth of Job. (Job i. 3.) See also the evidence of a similar kind afforded by Numb. xx. 17: but ‘ He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the watersprings into dry ground; a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.’

Then Faith^c with thee her sacred mansion made;
 And holy lips, within thy summer shade,
 Of bright Arcturus and Orion told;—
 And the sweet sway the wand'ring Pleiads hold^d;—
 And of the matin hymn which burst sublime
 From all Creation at the birth of Time;
 When 'Earth self-balanc'd on its centre hung,'
 And 'all the morning stars' like seraphs sung.—
 Such were the themes thy children lov'd to hear
 When first they dwelt along the vales of Seir.
 While youths and maids from each romantic town
 Went forth in dances when the sun went down;
 And antique tale, and legendary song,
 And harp and timbrel^e made the night less long.

But who are these^f that kneel in lowly state,
 And plead for love at Petra's haughty gate;

^c Job xix. 25—27.

^d "Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion.....Or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons?" Job xxxviii. 31, 32. See also ix. 9.

^e "They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance. They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ." Job xxi. 11, 12.

^f See the account of the application made by Moses for leave to conduct the Israelites, after their forty years wandering in the desert, across the mountains of Edom, which was the shortest road towards the Land of Promise. Numbers xx. 14—21.

That urge by each endearing claim their prayer?—
 Thy kindred, Edom,—the redeem'd are there!
 Scan well that brow,—and dost thou mark no line,
 No stamp of feature that resembles thine?
 Does nought recall an old ancestral tale:—
 Two brothers bred in Hebron's happy vale,—
 Far Mamre's oak—where blazed their altar fires;
 And Mamre's cave—where sleep your common sires?
 Or if such plea, all cruel as thou art!
 Can wake no softness in thy rugged heart,
 Yet feel for these—the youthful and the fair,
 The weary mother, and her fainting care!
 Yea, feel for all—the mighty orphan host,
 Which GOD, in love, hath guided to thy coast^f:
 Which doth but crave along yon path to roam,
 And win the haven of its promis'd home:—
 And how spake Edom? Threatening words he said
 To men whom Edom's very rocks had fed:

^f It can scarcely be necessary to suggest in illustration of the preceding verses the history of Isaac's two sons:—Mamre, (or Hebron) the residence of Abraham and Isaac, and the scene of GOD's visit to the former patriarch;—the cave of Machpelah, where Abraham and Sarah were buried, and where Esau and Jacob buried their father Isaac:—and the circumstance that all but two of those who entered the Land of Promise had lost their parents in the wilderness.

Of all the past, no image filled his eye,
 But Jacob's blessing—Esau's bitter cry:—
 He bar'd his sword!—On that unnatural day
 A curse came down when Israel turn'd away.

Years sped their course: the fierce Chaldean came,
 And Salem's walls were wrapt in robes of flame:
 Fair Zion's height with carnage all o'erspread;
 Her temple fallen, and its glory fled:
 And *thou* wert there! with unrelenting brow
 The first to slay—the first to triumph, thou^g!
 Foremost to hurl the blazing brand^h, and fill
 The festive cup on Zion's holy hillⁱ!
 Could none be found but thee? Could wrath divine
 Be dealt on Judah by no hand but thine?

^g “For thy violence against thy brother Jacob, shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever.... In the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them. But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger; neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress.... Neither shouldest thou have stood in the crossway, to cut off those of his that did escape,” &c. Obadiah v. 10—14.

^h “The Temple which the Edomites burned when Judæa was made desolate by the Chaldees.” 1 Esdr. iv. 45.

ⁱ “As thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee.... for as ye have drunk upon my holy mountain, so shall,” &c. Obadiah v. 15, 16.

"Remember, LORD,"—the mournful captives cried
 As sad they wept by Babel's willowy side^k,—
 "O LORD, remember, in that hour of woe,
 How taunting Edom prov'd our deadliest foe!"
 And that sad plaint, to Heav'n's high throne upborne,
 Tho' all that heard it curl'd the lip with scorn,
 Call'd down the wrath which spake from many a lyre
 In strains that blasted like the breath of fire:
 And the wild winds the accents swept along,
 Till Edom's cliffs reechoed to the song.

On cold high hearts at first that warning fell,
 For Edom held his wind-rock'd citadel:
 From Petra's cliff look'd forth in impious pride,
 And Zion's wrath and Zion's God defied.
 Then spake a voice—"Altho' thou build thy nest
 High as the stars;—and on the mountain's breast
 Sitt'st brooding like the eagle;—yet My frown
 Shall hurl thy glory and thy greatness down^l:

^k "By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows.....Remember, O LORD, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof." Psalm cxxxvii. 1, 2, 7.

^l See Jerem. xlix. 16. and the quotation from the prophecy of Obadiah prefixed to the poem.

Yea, when all earth rejoiceth, there shall be
A desolation and a curse on thee^m !”

Go, mark her well—and lies she not forlorn ?
The stranger’s wonder, and the heathen’s scornⁿ !
Her royal roofs with nettles all o’ergrown^o ;—
Her many towns a wilderness of stone^p ;—
And save where swims the eagle high in air^q,
No sound of life—no pulse of motion there^r !
There springs no verdure in her pathless vales^s :
The river flows not, and the fountain fails :

^m “ Thus saith the Lord GOD ; When the whole earth rejoiceth, I will make thee desolate.” Ezek. xxxv. 14.

ⁿ “ For, lo, I will make thee small among the heathen, and despised among men.” Jerem. xlix. 15.—Not to overload the page with quotations, it may suffice to state that the accounts of modern travellers shew that the prophecies concerning Edom have all met with the most extraordinary literal fulfilment.

^o “ And thorns shall come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof.” Is. xxxiv. 13.

^p “ He shall stretch out upon it the stones of emptiness.” Is. xxxiv. 11.

^q “ The owl also and the raven shall dwell in it.” Is. xxxiv. 11.—Eagles, hawks, and owls are the only living creatures Irby and Mangles found at Petra.

^r “ I will make thee perpetual desolations, and thy cities shall not return.” Ezek. xxxv. 9. “ From generation to generation it shall lie waste ; none shall pass through it for ever and ever.” Is. xxxiv. 10.

^s “ Thus saith the Lord GOD ; Behold, O Mount Seir, I am against thee, and I will stretch out mine hand against thee ;

She keeps no feature of her ancient face :
 There breathes not one of Esau's royal race^t :
 And while yon stars in tuneful circles roll,—
 While Summer cheers, and Winter chills the pole,—
 While Night and Day in soft succession shine,—
 So long shall Edom own her doom divine:
 Attest His truth, who spake the word of old,
 And stand, a mark for ages to behold :
 A wreck thrown up on Time's deserted shore,—
 A blight—a blank—a curse for evermore !

Daughter of Zion^u—fallen as thou art,
 Far other strains address thy sorrowing heart !
 Tho' bare thy mountains, and thy vales forlorn
 Unblest by culture, yield thee briar and thorn,—

and I will make thee most desolate. . . . O Mount Seir, and all Idumea, even all of it; and they shall know that I am the LORD." Ezek. xxxv. 3—15.

^t "There shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for the LORD hath spoken it." Obad. v. 18.

^u As the sacred narrative of the fortunes of GOD's chosen people begins by setting before us the hostility of Esau and Jacob; and at intervals, as if incidentally, reminds us of that continued and ever-widening breach; so the prophetic canon, when it is drawing towards a close, constantly brings before us, and sets in awful contrast, the ulterior destiny of Edom and Israel (e. g. Ezek. xxxv. and xxxvi: Joel iii. 19—21: Obad. v. 1—16. and v. 17—21.) The writer judged he could not more fitly conclude his verses than by exhibiting this contrast, in terms borrowed from prophecy.

Yet shall thy wilderness break forth and sing^x;
 The myrtle smile—the graceful cedar spring^y;—
 Life-giving streams thy barren rock disclose^z,
 And all the desert ‘ blossom like the rose’^a!
 Thy scatter’d sons, tho’ now they wander wide,
 Shall yet be gather’d to thy longing side^b;
 And all Ezekiel’s solemn vision be^c
 A type of faithful love fulfill’d in thee.
 Yea, tho’ rude hands have spoil’d fair Salem’s tow’rs;
 Tho’ steps profane have press’d her hallow’d bow’rs;
 Tho’ ‘ Siloa’s brook’ no longer softly flows
 Fast by the hill where once her glory rose^d;

^x “ The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.” Is. lv. 12.

^y “ Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree.” Is. lv. 13. “ I will plant in the wilderness the cedar....and the myrtle;.....I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together.” Is. xli. 19.

^z “ I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry lands springs of water.” Is. xli. 18.

^a “ And the desert shall rejoice, and blossom like the rose.” Is. xxxv. 1.

^b “ Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side.” Is. lx. 4.

^c Ezekiel xxxvii. 1—14.

^d Isaiah viii. 6.—Dr. Robinson mentions that there was no water in the reservoir of Siloam, when he visited Jerusalem.

Yet fear not thou! the voice of Love divine
Still cries—"Awaken thee!" "Arise, and shine^c."

'There is a river' which shall yet make blest

Thy heav'nly home, the city of thy rest.

That holy City, seen by prophet eyes^f,

Waits but the signal that shall rend the skies,

And thou shalt all the glorious sight behold^g,—

The walls of jasper, and the streets of gold:

The twelve bright Saints, impatient to unfurl

The twelve broad gates,—and ev'ry gate a pearl^h!

The Tree of life beside the crystal wave,

With 'leaves to heal the nations,' and to saveⁱ:

^c "Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city." Is. lii. 1.

"Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." Is. lx. 1.

^f "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Rev. xxi. 2.

^g "And there came unto me one of the seven Angels.... and he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious." Rev. xxi. 9, 10, 11.

^h It "had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve Angels.... and the building of the wall of it was of jasper.... and the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.... And the gates of it shall not be shut at all." Rev. xxi. 12, 18, 21, 25.

ⁱ "And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as

And HIM reveal'd whom thou so dimly knew,—
 The LAMB,—thy Sacrifice and Temple too; ·
 Whom Seraphs veil their faces when they sing^k,—
 Thine own Thrice-holy, Prophet, Priest, and King!
 And there no sun shall daily need to rise:
 And there no moon shall nightly sail the skies.
 What need of sun by day, or moon by night?
 The LORD thy glory, and the LAMB thy light^l!
 Thy portion there, where Time itself shall be
 One long long rest—one sabbath-day to thee!

crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb and on either side of the river was there the tree of life, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." Rev. xxii. 1, 2.

^k " And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." Rev xxi. 22. " I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up. . . . Above it stood the Seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face and one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy." Is. vi. 1—3.

^l " And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Rev. xxi. 23.

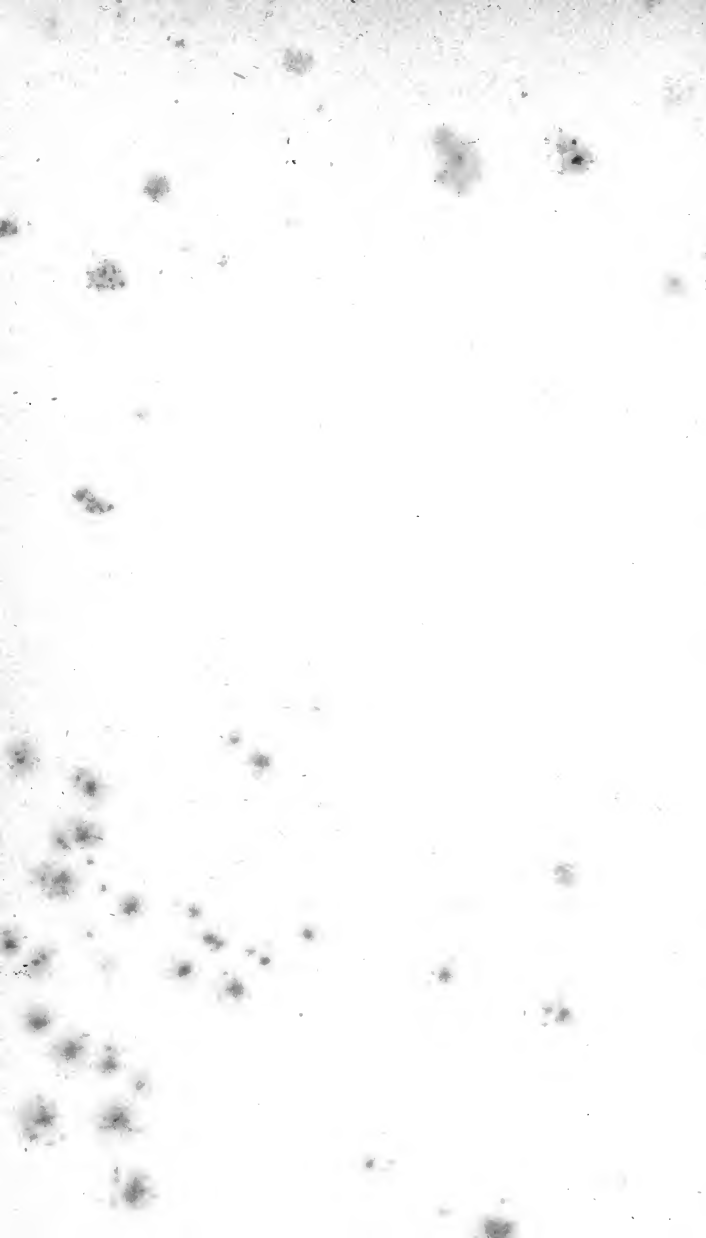
THE END.







David L. Moore,
from the Author, (see
the title page.)
One of seven copies printed
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Petra,

A PRIZE POEM,

RECITED IN THE THEATRE, OXFORD,

JUNE IV, MDCCCXLV.

BY

JOHN WILLIAM BURGON,

WORCESTER COLLEGE



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MDCCCXLV.





PETRA,

THE capital of that portion of Arabia which is thence called Petraea, occupies a mountain-hollow in the rocky region known as the Land of Seir; extending from the north-eastern extremity of the Arabian gulph to the south of the Dead Sea;—a territory which the Almighty assigned to the Edomites, or descendants of Esau. It is twice mentioned in Scripture by the equivalent Hebrew name SELAH, or *the Rock*: and thenceforward, (namely, from the seventh or eighth century before our æra,) it obtains no further notice for four hundred years. During this interval the Nabathæans, or descendants of Nebaioth, the eldest son of Ishmael, had expelled the Edomites from their ancient stronghold, and driven them northward, where their territory was recognised for a few centuries under the Hellenized name of Idumæa. Then it was that one portion of the prophecy concerning the descendants of Esau obtained its fulfilment: they faded from the world's eye, and ceased to be a nation.

Petraea, henceforth part of the Nabathæan territory, became a Roman province; and PETRA, as some ancient historians relate, and as its astonishing ruins abundantly testify, continued to be its wealthy and flourishing capital.

It obtains some slight ecclesiastical notice so late as the sixth century: but from that time it suddenly disappears from the page of history; and the doom pronounced on the land of the Edomites was entirely accomplished. PETRA had continued wholly unknown for twelve hundred years, when the adventurous Burekhardt discovered its ruins in 1812.

Some valuable and interesting notices of this wonderful city, and the surrounding region, are found in the second volume of Dr. Robinson's Biblical Researches; and the external features of the place are delineated in Laborde's folio work on Petra; but Roberts's Sketches are by far the most eloquent commentary that has yet appeared on the subject.

ARGUMENT.

SACRED associations allow us to regard the land of Edom almost as the birth-place of song.—In the desolation with which it has been visited, Petra has shared largely.—Enviably feelings of the Traveller who discovered its forgotten site.—The magnificent scenery around Petra,—recalling the miracle of the Exode.—Wonderful approach to the city.—Meditation on its beautiful ruins.—The grandeur—gaiety (suggested by the remains of a theatre)—and flourishing condition of Petra in the time of the Romans,—from which, in common with the rest of the cities of Edom, it fell by some awful but unrecorded visitation.—The early and later state of the surrounding country contrasted.—Its present barrenness exhibits the fulfilment of the prophecies concerning it; denounced chiefly in consequence of the hostility of the Edomites against the children of Israel.

The Poem concludes by contrasting the hopeless desolation of Edom and the extinction of Esau's descendants, with the prospects of the Holy Land and the glorious promises in store for the posterity of Jacob.

Petra.

“The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground?”

“Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the LORD.”

SPIRIT of Song! that oft at dewy eve,
When Elfin sprites their frolic dances weave,
Meetest the poet as he walks unseen
The twilight valley, or the dusky green;—
Or by some mountain lake's romantic brim
Wakest the drowsy echoes, all for him;—
And many a time art well content to stray
Where garden-alleys quench the blaze of day,
And small birds sing, and babbling fountains play: }
Know'st thou the land—a land of giant mould—
By Heav'n assign'd to Edom's race of old^a?

^a “I have given Mount Seir unto Esau for a possession.”
Deut. ii. 5.

Where rocks on rocks—on mountains mountains pil'd—
 Have form'd a scene so wondrous and so wild,
 That gazing there man seems to gaze upon
 The rough rude ocean frozen into stone?
 Full well thou know'st! for sure, when Israel wound
 His homeward journey o'er that hallow'd ground,—
 Forc'd in the depths of those wild hills to wait
 And kneel, a suppliant, at his brother's gate,—
 While burning anthems rose from many a tongue,
 Not coldly mute the harp of Judah hung!
 And did not one, in yet remoter time,
 Wake there the ' birth-notes of the holy chime ?'
 Doth not to Edom's rugged land belong
 The man of Uz—the Morning-star of song^b !
 Yea, and to Fancy's ear, o'er rock and hill
 More solemn harpings there are floating still.
 Harps that long since have been attun'd above
 To hymns of joy, and seraph-lays of love,
 In awful strains from many a trembling wire
 Have pour'd o'er Edom words of deepest ire!

^b Job i. 1. The date commonly assigned to this Book, the most ancient in the world, is B. C. 1520.—The land where Job dwelt (which seems to have derived its name from Uz, the grandson of Shem, Gen. x. 23.) is identified with Edom by the prophet Jeremiah, Lament. iv. 21.

Words that yet live and burn—in whose keen ray
 The life and light of Edom ebb'd away :
 Still fading, star-like, from the blaze of day ^c!

And thou too, Petra, tho' the Roman came
 And fann'd thy dying glories into flame;
 Carv'd the tall column—rear'd the stately dome—
 And seem'd the founder of a second Rome,—
 How brief the pageant^d! On thy dying brow
 Men laid a crown—but who shall crown thee now ?
 A thousand summers o'er thy ruins crept :
 A thousand winters o'er thy ruins wept :
 A thousand years—and still the very spot
 Where once thou wert so glorious, was forgot !

What joy was his—the wandering man, who first
 Dissolv'd the spell ;—on whom the Vision burst
 Of that enchanted City, as it lay
 Bath'd in the splendours of a Syrian day.
 O Fancy, thou that must so oft have shed
 Dreams of its beauty round his sleeping head ;
 Woke in his heart the wild-bird's wish to roam,
 And told of marvels in that mountain-home ;

^c The prophecies concerning Edom, in fulness and minuteness, are second only to those concerning the chosen people of God.

^d “ Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places ; thus saith the LORD of hosts, *They shall build, but I will throw down.*” Malachi i. 4.

Still be it thine with angel-hand to guide
 These longing footsteps by that trav'ller's side!
 Waft o'er mine ear one echo of the strain
 Which dark-eyed Kedar pours along the plain;
 Or let one gaze, how brief soe'er, inspire
 These falt'ring lips to glow with Eastern fire!

Sudden, around me rocks and cliffs arise;
 The earth their footstool, and their crown the skies:
 Some soaring steep, as if to curtain round
 From mortal gaze each nook of holy ground:
 Some prostrate hurl'd, as if by that fierce storm
 Which rent the mountains, when th' Almighty form
 'Rose up from Seir;' and trembling Sinai saw
 His thousand Saints dispense His fiery law^e!
 And one there is which, beetling o'er the rest,
 Pillows a Saint upon its rocky crest^f:

^e The scene of terrific splendour which attended the delivery of the Law, so dimly hinted at in the Book of Exodus, is partly disclosed to us in later portions of the Bible. Thus in Deuteronomy; "The LORD came from Sinai and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from Mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them." Deut. xxxiii. 2. Compare Ps. lxxviii. 17. and the references to the New Testament in the margin. See also the seventh and eighth verses of the same Psalm; which seem a quotation from the Song of Deborah and Barak.

^f "And Moses did as the LORD commanded: and they went

Uplifted high—where none but stars can keep
 Their bright-eyed vigils round his lonely sleep.
 Fit scene for marvels ! In such land should none
 But giants move, and giant deeds be done.
 O'er such huge hills might fitly seem to stray
 A ransom'd people on their homeward way.
 In such wild valleys, round their Ark rever'd,
 At set of sun their myriad tents be rear'd.
 Myriads ! and yet, above them and around,
 Such giant features of the landscape frown'd,
 They seem'd no more—that people and their guide—
 Than Jethro's flock on Horeb's hallow'd side !

Ah say, ere gather'd in their destin'd fold,
 While Israel wander'd o'er this waste of old ;
 As, eve by eve, upon these mountains brown,
 Silent as snow the heav'nly bread came down ;—
 From the cleft rock as gush'd the sparkling wave
 To cheer their sinking spirits, and to save ;—
 And the bright pillar, through the livelong night,
 Shed o'er their tents its soft celestial light ;—

up into Mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation. And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son ; *and Aaron died there in the top of the Mount.*" Numb. xx. 27, 28.

Did none perchance of Judah's faithful line
 Read the high teaching of each heav'n-sent sign ^g ?
 Say—while around him others pin'd forlorn
 For Canaan's valleys “ standing thick with corn”—
 Did no fond heart, with nobler instinct fraught,
 Sigh for the substance which those shadows taught ?
 On trembling pinions seek to soar above,
 Refin'd by sorrow, and sublim'd by love,—
 Till Faith discern'd what Reason dimly scann'd,
 And Hope gave promise of the better land ?

Still on for Petra,—till the desert wide
 Shrinks to a valley; and on either side
 The rude rock springeth, and a long array
 Of tombs, forgotten, sadden all the way ^h.
 Then the earth yawns, terrific : and a path,
 By Nature fram'd in waywardness or wrath,
 Winds where two rocks precipitously frown,—
 The giant warders of that wondrous town ⁱ !

^g The spiritual nature of both Sacraments was clearly set forth by Moses in the wilderness. Deut. viii. 3. and x. 16.

^h “ The valley contracts more and more, and the cliffs become higher, presenting on each side a street of tombs..... Here is the opening of the terrific chasm, which anciently formed the only avenue to the city on this side.” Robinson, ii. p. 515, 516.

ⁱ “ The rocks are all of reddish sand stone, perpendicular on

Day comes not here,—or in such spectral guise,
She seems an outcast from yon happy skies.

In silent awe the Arab steals along,
Nor cheers his camels with their wonted song.

Well may the spirit, left alone to brood
On the dim shapes which haunt that solitude,
O'erflow with joy—that dreary pathway past—
When Petra bursts upon the gaze at last.

O passing beautiful—in this wild spot
Temples, and tombs, and dwellings,—all forgot !
One sea of sunlight far around them spread,
And skies of sapphire mantling overhead.
They seem no work of man's creative hand,
Where Labour wrought as wayward Fancy plann'd ;
But from the rock as if by magic grown,
Eternal—silent—beautiful—alone !
Not virgin white—like that old Doric shrine^k
Where once Athena held her rites divine :

both sides ; and in some places they overhang the passage, so as almost to shut out the light of the sky....Indeed the whole vast mass of rock seems as if originally rent asunder by some great convulsion of nature, leaving behind this long, narrow, winding, magnificent chasm." Ibid. p. 516.

^k The Parthenon was constructed of the marble from Mount Pentelicum,—“ admitting as fine a surface, and presenting as beautiful a colour, as ivory.” Leake's Athens, i. p. 334.

Not saintly grey—like many a minster fane
 That crowns the hill or sanctifies the plain :
 But rosy-red¹,—as if the blush of dawn
 Which first beheld them were not yet withdrawn :
 The hues of youth upon a brow of woe,
 Which men called old two thousand years ago !
 Match me such marvel, save in Eastern clime,—
 A rose-red city—half as old as Time !

And this is Petra—this the lofty boast
 Of Edom's once unconquerable coast !
 These the gay halls thro' which, in days of old,
 The tide of life so rapturously roll'd !
 These the proud streets where Wealth, with lavish hand,
 Pour'd the rich spoils of ev'ry Orient land ;
 All that the seaman's timid barque beguiles,
 To Cush and Ophir, ' Tarshish and the Isles :'
 Afric's red gold,—Arabia's spicy store,—
 And pearl and plume from India's furthest shore^m !

¹ " Not the least remarkable circumstance in the peculiarities of this singular spot, is the colour of the rocks. They present not a dead mass of dull monotonous red ; but an endless variety of bright and living hues, from the deepest crimson to the softest pink." Robinson, ii. 531. Irby and Mangles, and Laborde, repeatedly notice the singular effect of the " rose-coloured granite" of Petra.

^m " The inhabitants of this region had early become extremely engaged in commerce, as the carriers of the rich products

How chang'd—how fallen ! All her glory fled,
 The widow'd city ⁿ mourns her many dead.
 Like some fond heart which gaunt Disease hath left
 Of all it liv'd for—all it lov'd, bereft ;
 Mute in its anguish ! struck with pangs too deep
 For words to utter, or for tears to weep.

Yet hearts and eyes there be, well skill'd to trace
 The living features in the lifeless face,
 For whom that silent desert air seems rife
 With tuneful voices and the pulse of life.
 For them sweeps by in glitt'ring pomp again
 The warlike pageant and the peaceful train :
 For them bright shadows fill these vacant halls,
 And Beauty wakes where'er their footstep falls.
 “ Heard ye it not ? ”—the bright-eyed dreamer cries,—
 “ Heard ye no shout from yonder seats arise ° ? ”

of the East between the Red Sea and the ports of the Phenicians. In the first expedition sent by Antigonos, the men of Petra were absent at a mart, and Athenæus found in Petra a large quantity of frankincense and myrrh, and five hundred talents of silver. Strabo relates that the merchandize of India and Arabia was transported on camels from Leuce Kome to Petra, and thence to Rhinocolura, and other places. Under the Romans this trade appears to have become still more prosperous,” &c. Robinson, ii. 561, 562.

ⁿ On the coins of Petra, the city is represented as a veiled and turreted female sitting on a rock.

° One of the first objects which arrests the eye of the

(And his rapt gaze in ecstasy is bent
 On what seems Pleasure's mournful monument.)
 "Ye deem the actor and his mimic rage
 Pass'd like a shadow from you ruin'd stage;
 But to mine eye he lives and moves:—'tis *we*
 Are shadows here—the substance only he!
 Or do I dream?—they come and fade so fast—
 Now here, now there—now present, and now past.
 But now, a stern old king^p,—whom anguish strong
 Had goaded into madness—stalk'd along,
 Sightless and crownless: now, a maiden^q stands
 Ev'n where he stood; and in her lily hands
 Enfolds an urn: ineffable the grace—
 The marble sorrow of that classic face!
 It fades—'tis fled! and on a lofty car
 There sits another^r:—like some baleful star

traveller on emerging from the terrific defile which forms the approach to Petra, is a "theatre, wholly hewn out of the live rock. . . . The cliffs on each side are full of tombs; while in front, along the face of the eastern cliffs, the eye of the spectator rests on a multitude of the largest and most splendid sepulchres. Strange contrast! where a taste for the frivolities of the day, was at the same time gratified by the magnificence of tombs; amusement in a cemetery; a theatre in the midst of sepulchres." Robinson, ii. p. 521, 522.

^p Œdipus. See the Œd. Tyr. v. 1307, and following verses.

^q Electra. See the passage beginning ὦ φιλετάτου μνημῖον ἀνθρώπων ἱμοί. Soph. El. 1126.

^r Cassandra. Æsch. Ag. 1039. 1054.

Glares her wild eye^s—and from her lips of ire
Streams a full torrent of prophetic fire^t.
She raves—she rises—and with frenzied hand
Dashes to earth her garland and her wand^u
Sublimely beautiful ! when this is o'er
Let nothing follow.—I will gaze no more !”

And did ye thus, ye men of Petra—say,
Thus did ye while the listless hours away ?
Tho’ ev’ry cliff, tho’ ev’ry crag around,
With graves on graves innumerable frown’d—
Thus could ye sit, contented with a toy,
And lapt in dreams of unsubstantial joy ?
Light-hearted race ! o’er them it flung no gloom
That Echo answer’d from a kinsman’s tomb.
Bred in these mountain valleys, those dark eyes,
Fierce as their summer—cloudless as their skies—
Belov’d and loving—blest and blessing—here
Made friends with Death throughout the livelong year^v :

^s Ibid. 1063. *τρέπο; δὲ θηρὸς ὡς ναιρέτου.*

^t Ibid. 1215. *ὕπ’ αὖ με δινὸς ὀρθομαντίας πόνος | στροβιῖ,
ταράσσαν φροιμίους ἱφημίους. κ τ λ.*

^u *ἦτ’ ἐς φθίρον πεισόντ’.* See *ibid.* 1264—1270.

^v “ In looking at the wonders of this ancient city, one is at a loss, whether most to admire the wildness of the position and natural scenery, or the taste and skill with which it was fashioned into a secure retreat, and adorned with splendid

And hop'd, perchance, when Life's gay round was o'er,
 And joy and sorrow sway'd their hearts no more,
 Their faithful souls, unfetter'd, yet might dwell
 Amid the haunts they lov'd in life so well !

And Petra thus had rear'd another race
 In turn to revel in her pride of place :
 Thus the old eagles of imperial Rome
 Seem'd on her hills to find a second home :
 And Roman arts with Roman arms arose,
 To blot the mem'ry of her former foes.
 Tho' Edom's line, by Ishmael's^{*} sword oppress'd,
 Had long been exil'd from their rock-built nest,
 On Edom's rugged hills, as loath to set,
 The sun of bygone summers linger'd yet :

structures,—chiefly for the dead. The most striking feature of the place consists, not in the fact that there are occasional excavations and sculptures like those above described ; but in the innumerable multitude of such excavations, along the whole extent of perpendicular rocks adjacent to the main area, and in all the lateral valleys and chasms ; the entrances of very many of which are variously, richly, and often fantastically decorated, with every imaginable order and style of architecture." Robinson, ii. 529, 530. " Indeed throughout almost every quarter of this metropolis, the depositories of the dead must have presented themselves constantly to the eyes of the inhabitants, and have almost outnumbered the habitations of the living." Irby and Mangles (quoted by Laborde.)

* See the Advertisement prefixed to the Poem.

And men forgot—or deem'd an idle tale—
 The words of doom that hung o'er Petra's vale.
 It could not be—that old portentous chime
 So long had slumber'd by the shores of Time,
 Why heed it now? why talk of gloom to-day,
 When Heav'n is blue, and Earth so green and gay?

So spake the men of old—and ev'ry heart
 To festive revel, or to crowded mart,
 Flew for its joy,—not oft'ner sought than found,—
 So gaily there the circling hours went round!
 And nurs'd were they in Luxury—and knew
 The spot of earth where ev'ry pleasure grew.
 Their fountains flung their waters to the skies:
 Their groves lay steep'd in hues of Paradise^y:
 Here rose the gorgeous sepulchre, and there
 Some fairy palace hung its roof in air:
 While climes remote each costly gift supplied,
 (For ships of Petra sail'd on ev'ry tide;)
 And all the East, in conscious splendour, roll'd
 At Petra's feet her jewels and her gold.

O that her rocks had language! and might tell
 In what wild shape the storm of vengeance fell^z.

^y Τὰ μὲν ἐκτὸς (says Strabo, speaking of Petra) κρημνοῦ ἀποτόμῃ, τὰ δ' ἐντὸς πηγὰς ἀφθόνους ἔχοντες εἰς τὴν ὑδρείαν καὶ κηπίαν. xvi. 4. 21. (quoted by Robinson.)

^z See Robinson, ii. 575, 576.

Swift—sweeping—sudden—whensoe'er it came ;
 Blighting and blasting,—like the breath of flame.
 One piercing cry—one agonizing wail—
 One voice from Edom's cities told the tale :
 One cry of bitterness—and all was o'er ;
 But the far echo smote the Red-Sea shore^a ;
 And peal'd along its waters—till the waves
 Made hollow answer from their coral caves^b !

How chang'd, O Edom, since that hour, the scene
 From what the morning of thy days had been !
 When many a valley rich with corn and wine,
 When streams of earth, and dews of Heav'n were thine ;
 And flocks and herds—a patriarch's ample store—
 Till all thy cup with plenteousness ran o'er^c.

^a “ Hear the counsel of the LORD that He hath taken against Edom.... The earth is moved at the noise of their fall, at the cry, *the noise thereof was heard in the Red Sea.*” Jerem. xlix. 20, 21.

^b An Italian traveller relates of his voyage on the Red Sea, “ that the weather was so calm, and the water so transparent, that he amused himself by observing the peculiarity of the depths beneath him, where weeds and corals grow to such a size, and so disposed, as almost to have the appearance of groves and gardens.”

^c The terms of Esau's blessing (Gen. xxvii. 39.) well agree with what we read of the pastoral wealth of Job. (Job i. 3.) See also the evidence of a similar kind afforded by Numb. xx. 17: but ‘ He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the watersprings into dry ground ; a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.’

Then Faith^c with thee her sacred mansion made ;
 And holy lips, within thy summer shade,
 Of bright Arcturus and Orion told ;—
 And the sweet sway the wand'ring Pleiads hold^d ;—
 And of the matin hymn which burst sublime
 From all Creation at the birth of Time ;
 When ' Earth self-balance'd on its centre hung,'
 And ' all the morning stars' like seraphs sung.—
 Such were the themes thy children lov'd to hear
 When first they dwelt along the vales of Seir.
 While youths and maids from each romantic town
 Went forth in dances when the sun went down ;
 And antique tale, and legendary song,
 And harp and timbrel^e made the night less long.

But who are these^f that kneel in lowly state,
 And plead for love at Petra's haughty gate ;

^c Job xix. 25—27.

^d " Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion.....Or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons?" Job xxxviii. 31, 32. See also ix. 9.

^e " They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance. They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ." Job xxi. 11, 12.

^f See the account of the application made by Moses for leave to conduct the Israelites, after their forty years wandering in the desert, across the mountains of Edom, which was the shortest road towards the Land of Promise. Numbers xx. 14.—21.

That urge by each endearing claim their prayer?—
 Thy kindred, Edom,—the redeem'd are there!
 Scan well that brow,—and dost thou mark no line,
 No stamp of feature that resembles thine?
 Does nought recall an old ancestral tale:—
 Two brothers bred in Hebron's happy vale,—
 Far Mamre's oak—where blazed their altar fires;
 And Mamre's cave—where sleep your common sires?
 Or if such plea, all cruel as thou art!
 Can wake no softness in thy rugged heart,
 Yet feel for these—the youthful and the fair,
 The weary mother, and her fainting care!
 Yea, feel for all—the mighty orphan host,
 Which God, in love, hath guided to thy coast^f:
 Which doth but crave along yon path to roam,
 And win the haven of its promis'd home:—
 And how spake Edom? Threatening words he said
 To men whom Edom's very rocks had fed:

^f It can scarcely be necessary to suggest in illustration of the preceding verses the history of Isaac's two sons:—Mamre, (or Hebron) the residence of Abraham and Isaac, and the scene of God's visit to the former patriarch;—the cave of Machpelah, where Abraham and Sarah were buried, and where Esau and Jacob buried their father Isaac:—and the circumstance that all but two of those who entered the Land of Promise had lost their parents in the wilderness.

Of all the past, no image filled his eye,
 But Jacob's blessing—Esau's bitter cry:—
 He bar'd his sword!—On that unnatural day
 A curse came down when Israel turn'd away.

Years sped their course: the fierce Chaldeau came,
 And Salem's walls were wrapt in robes of flame:
 Fair Zion's height with carnage all o'erspread;
 Her temple fallen, and its glory fled:
 And *thou* wert there! with unrelenting brow
 The first to slay—the first to triumph, thou^g!
 Foremost to hurl the blazing brand^h, and fill
 The festive cup on Zion's holy hillⁱ!
 Could none be found but thee? Could wrath divine
 Be dealt on Judah by no hand but thine?

^g “For thy violence against thy brother Jacob, shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever.... In the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them. But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger; neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress.... Neither shouldest thou have stood in the crossway, to cut off those of his that did escape,” &c. Obadiah v. 10—14.

^h “The Temple which the Edomites burned when Judæa was made desolate by the Chaldees.” 1 Esdr. iv. 45.

ⁱ “As thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee.... for as ye have drunk upon my holy mountain, so shall,” &c. Obadiah v. 15, 16.

"Remember, LORD,"—the mournful captives cried
 As sad they wept by Babel's willowy side^k,—
 "O LORD, remember, in that hour of woe,
 How taunting Edom prov'd our deadliest foe!"
 And that sad plaint, to Heav'n's high throne upborne,
 Tho' all that heard it curl'd the lip with scorn,
 Call'd down the wrath which spake from many a lyre
 In strains that blasted like the breath of fire:
 And the wild winds the accents swept along,
 Till Edom's cliffs reechoed to the song.

On cold high hearts at first that warning fell,
 For Edom held his wind-rock'd citadel:
 From Petra's cliff look'd forth in impious pride,
 And Zion's wrath and Zion's GOD defied.
 Then spake a voice—"Altho' thou build thy nest
 High as the stars;—and on the mountain's breast
 Sitt'st brooding like the eagle;—yet My frown
 Shall hurl thy glory and thy greatness down¹:

^k "By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows.....Remember, O LORD, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof." Psalm cxxxvii. 1, 2, 7.

¹ See Jerem. xlix. 16. and the quotation from the prophecy of Obadiah prefixed to the poem.

Yea, when all earth rejoiceth, there shall be
A desolation and a curse on thee^m!”

Go, mark her well—and lies she not forlorn?
The stranger’s wonder, and the heathen’s scornⁿ!
Her royal roofs with nettles all o’ergrown^o;—
Her many towns a wilderness of stone^p;—
And save where swims the eagle high in air^q,
No sound of life—no pulse of motion there^r!
There springs no verdure in her pathless vales^s:
The river flows not, and the fountain fails:

^m “ Thus saith the Lord GOD; When the whole earth rejoiceth, I will make thee desolate.” Ezek. xxxv. 14.

ⁿ “ For, lo, I will make thee small among the heathen, and despised among men.” Jerem. xlix. 15.—Not to overload the page with quotations, it may suffice to state that the accounts of modern travellers shew that the prophecies concerning Edom have all met with the most extraordinary literal fulfilment.

^o “ And thorns shall come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof.” Is. xxxiv. 13.

^p “ He shall stretch out upon it the stones of emptiness.” Is. xxxiv. 11.

^q “ The owl also and the raven shall dwell in it.” Is. xxxiv. 11.—Eagles, hawks, and owls are the only living creatures Irby and Mangles found at Petra.

^r “ I will make thee perpetual desolations, and thy cities shall not return.” Ezek. xxxv. 9. “ From generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever.” Is. xxxiv. 10.

^s “ Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O Mount Seir, I am against thee, and I will stretch out mine hand against thee;

She keeps no feature of her ancient face :
 There breathes not one of Esau's royal race^t :
 And while yon stars in tuneful circles roll,—
 While Summer cheers, and Winter chills the pole,—
 While Night and Day in soft succession shine,—
 So long shall Edom own her doom divine:
 Attest His truth, who spake the word of old,
 And stand, a mark for ages to behold :
 A wreck thrown up on Time's deserted shore,—
 A blight—a blank—a curse for evermore !

Daughter of Zion^u—fallen as thou art,
 Far other strains address thy sorrowing heart !
 Tho' bare thy mountains, and thy vales forlorn
 Unblest by culture, yield thee briar and thorn,—

and I will make thee most desolate. . . . O Monnt Seir, and all Idumea, even all of it; and they shall know that I am the LORD." Ezek. xxxv. 3—15.

^t "There shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for the LORD hath spoken it." Obad. v. 18.

^u As the sacred narrative of the fortunes of God's chosen people begins by setting before us the hostility of Esau and Jacob; and at intervals, as if incidentally, reminds us of that continued and ever-widening breach; so the prophetic canon, when it is drawing towards a close, constantly brings before us, and sets in awful contrast, the ulterior destiny of Edom and Israel (e. g. Ezek. xxxv. and xxxvi: Joel iii. 19—21: Obad. v. 1—16. and v. 17—21.) The writer judged he could not more fitly conclude his verses than by exhibiting this contrast, in terms borrowed from prophecy.

Yet shall thy wilderness break forth and sing^x;
 The myrtle smile—the graceful cedar spring^y;—
 Life-giving streams thy barren rock disclose^z,
 And all the desert ‘ blossom like the rose’^a!
 Thy scatter’d sons, tho’ now they wander wide,
 Shall yet be gather’d to thy longing side^b;
 And all Ezekiel’s solemn vision be^c
 A type of faithful love fulfill’d in thee.
 Yea, tho’ rude hands have spoil’d fair Salem’s tow’rs;
 Tho’ steps profane have press’d her hallow’d bow’rs;
 Tho’ ‘ Siloa’s brook’ no longer softly flows
 Fast by the hill where once her glory rose^d;

^x “ The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.” Is. lv. 12.

^y “ Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree.” Is. lv. 13. “ I will plant in the wilderness the cedar....and the myrtle;.....I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together.” Is. xli. 19.

^z “ I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry lands springs of water.” Is. xli. 18.

^a “ And the desert shall rejoice, and blossom like the rose.” Is. xxxv. 1.

^b “ Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side.” Is. lx. 4.

^c Ezekiel xxxvii. 1—14.

^d Isaiah viii. 6.—Dr. Robinson mentions that there was no water in the reservoir of Siloam, when he visited Jerusalem.

Yet fear not thou! the voice of Love divine
 Still cries—"Awaken thee!" "Arise, and shine^e."
 'There is a river' which shall yet make blest
 Thy heav'nly home, the city of thy rest.
 That holy City, seen by prophet eyes^f,
 Waits but the signal that shall rend the skies,
 And thou shalt all the glorious sight behold^g,—
 The walls of jasper, and the streets of gold:
 The twelve bright Saints, impatient to unfurl
 The twelve broad gates,—and ev'ry gate a pearl^h!
 The Tree of life beside the crystal wave,
 With 'leaves to heal the nations,' and to saveⁱ:

^e "Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city." Is. lii. 1.
 "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." Is. lx. 1.

^f "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Rev. xxi. 2.

^g "And there came unto me one of the seven Angels. . . and he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious." Rev. xxi. 9, 10, 11.

^h It "had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve Angels. . . and the building of the wall of it was of jasper. . . and the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. . . And the gates of it shall not be shut at all." Rev. xxi. 12, 18, 21, 25.

ⁱ "And he shewed me a pure river of water of life clear as

And HIM reveal'd whom thou so dimly knew,—
 The LAMB,—thy Sacrifice and Temple too;
 Whom Seraphs veil their faces when they sing^k,—
 Thine own Thrice-holy, Prophet, Priest, and King!
 And there no sun shall daily need to rise:
 And there no moon shall nightly sail the skies.
 What need of sun by day, or moon by night?
 The LORD thy glory, and the LAMB thy light!^l
 Thy portion there, where Time itself shall be
 One long long rest—one sabbath-day to thee!

crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb and on either side of the river was there the tree of life, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." Rev. xxii. 1, 2.

^k "And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." Rev xxi. 22. "I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up. . . . Above it stood the Seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face . . . and one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy." Is. vi. 1—3.

^l "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Rev. xxi. 23.

THE END.





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